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EDUCATION WEEK

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Employees Protest Firm's Tactics at Baltimore Schools

E.A.I. Official Pledges To Address Concerns

By Peter Schmidt

BALTIMORE—The changes that a month of private management have brought to Malcolm X Elementary School here are evident, its employees say, the moment they walk through the door.

The floors are spotless, and the hallways are freshly painted in bright, crayon-like colors.

But the sunny new colors at Malcolm X and eight other schools here cannot hide the anger and resentment that the arrival of Education Alternatives Inc. has engendered in some employees.

"I've been put out of a job," lamented Ruth A. Stewart, a paraprofessional, last week as she awaited a transfer from Malcolm X, where she has worked for 18 years.

Just a few weeks into the new school year, the complaints of many paraprofessionals and other employees have threatened to stall one of the boldest experiments yet in public school privatization—the takeover of eight elementary schools and one middle school here by a Minneapolis-based, for-profit firm.

Although no one here says he expected the changeover to be painless, neither did district or E.A.I. officials anticipate the events of the last few weeks: A boycott by teachers of E.A.I. training sessions, the picketing of city hall by union members protesting E.A.I. decisions, and the intercession of Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke—a major proponent of the effort—to persuade the firm to change some of its plans.

Most teachers interviewed last week said they were excited about the prospect for improved schools in the 110,000-student district, but they were concerned about some of E.A.I.'s proposals for achieving that change.

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Where School's Spirit Is a 'Sense of Community'

Fred Mertz

"If you cannot tell a student why they need to know" something, says Charles Vidal, the principal at Hanshaw Middle School, "you're wasting their time."

By Daniel Gursky

MODESTO, CALIF.—Evelyn A. Hanshaw Middle School here, like every school filled with 12- to 14-year-olds, is a study in adolescent hormones.

Boys with adult bodies and sideburns sit beside baby-faced classmates still waiting for puberty to kick in. The girls, more mature and looking even older with the help of ample makeup and hair spray, are at the age when even 14-year-old males seem unbearably juvenile.

By all accounts, Hanshaw's students find themselves at the most difficult period of childhood—a time of pimples, growth spurts, insecurity, unfamiliar emotions, and an increasing desire for independence. As one teacher here points out, academics rank near the bottom of most students' concerns.

Hanshaw's students are far from atypical. In recent years experts in early-ado-

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Hundreds Turn Backs on Public Schools As Privately Funded Vouchers Take Hold

By Mark Walsh

Hundreds of children from low-income families are enrolling in private schools for the first time this fall, thanks to a boomlet in local voucher programs funded by businesses, private foundations, and individual donors.

Pupils in Atlanta, Little Rock, Ark., Milwaukee, San Antonio, and a number of other cities are the beneficiaries of an emerging movement designed to provide low-income parents with more choice in education.

"The business community is tapping into a huge market of low-income people who want to take their kids out of the public schools, but don't have the resources," said Allyson Tucker, the manager of the center for educational policy at the Heritage Foundation, a Washington think tank.

Privately financed vouchers offer "a way for these kids to get out of failing schools and into private schools that offer a far superior education," added Ms. Tucker, who has been tracking the trend.

The aims parallel those of proposed systems of publicly funded choice that would include private schools. But the sponsors of the new private-sector initiatives say they are unwilling to wait while state and federal lawmakers debate the merits of government vouchers for education.

"There is a sense of frustration with the unwillingness of government to move" on measures such as vouchers, said Denis P. Doyle, an education analyst and a senior

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Boston and Baltimore Weigh Idea of Merging City, School Libraries

By Debra Viadero

Looking to economize and to improve library services for children, officials in Baltimore and Boston are weighing proposals to merge school libraries in whole or in part with public library systems.

Such mergers have rarely been tried in the United States, according to experts. The proposals in the two cities, although not yet fully formed, are already running into opposition from those who question whether they can work and whether they are in the best interest of children.

"There's no question that in times of recession, people are really going to be looking for forms of consolidation that could really save money," said Arthur Curley, the director of the Boston Public Library.

The board of the city library last week asked Mr. Curley to explore with Boston's superintendent of schools the idea of a new relationship between public and school libraries.

In Baltimore, Mayor Kurt Schmoke, who has been promoting the concept of library consolidation for more than two years, gave it a boost this summer when he proposed transferring about 30 school librarians to the Enoch Pratt Free Library system.

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Pilot Test Offers a Glimpse of Board's Teacher Assessment

By Ann Bradley

TAMPA, FLA.—Since the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was founded five years ago, educators have wondered what its assessments for identifying superior teachers would look like.

Now, as the developers of the board's first assessments move into the final stages of their work, a picture is emerging of the types of exercises teachers may be asked to do.

The University of Pittsburgh and the Connecticut Department of Education, which are creating the assessments for teachers of English language arts who work with children in early adolescence, are proposing a three-part package.

One component is a portfolio, a tool that increasingly is seen as holding great promise for assessing the work of teachers and students alike.

Over the summer, a group of educators gathered at the University of Southern Florida here to score sample portfolios that were assembled by classroom teachers.

For many participants, the intensive, three-week session pro-

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Stephen Wertz

From left, Bill Thompson, Mary Bixby, and Penny Pence collaborate on judging teacher portfolios.

Also in the news

9 **On the Wrong Track**
Ability grouping hinders poor students and does nothing to help better ones, an upcoming national study says.

IN SUMMARY

A Win for Whittle
A California state judge dealt the state's schools chief a defeat last week by refusing to ban the Channel One news show from state classrooms.
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Little To Cheer in Chelsea
A new report says that three years into its management of the troubled Chelsea, Mass., schools, Boston University has yet to achieve significant improvement.
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A Taxing Decision
Faced with falling state revenues, the Houston school board has approved a budget that is balanced on a 32 percent increase in property taxes.
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New Alternatives
A national study has found a surge in the number of alternative-certification programs for teachers that require formal training and mentoring.
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Economic Ignorance
A survey by the Gallup Organization reveals high rates of "economic illiteracy" among 12th-grade students, college seniors, and the general public.
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Not Ready for College Math
Nearly one-quarter of high school seniors who took the American College Testing Program test this will need remedial mathematics in college, the test's author says.
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California Takeover
The Compton district near Los Angeles is poised to become the first in California to be taken over by the state for academic deficiencies.
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ACROSS THE NATION

NATIONAL

Reports of Attempted Censorship Reach 10-Year High, Survey Finds

Reported incidents of attempted censorship involving school materials reached their highest level in 10 years during the 1991-92 school year, according to an annual survey by People for the American Way.

Attempts by parents, community groups, and others to have books or curricular materials banned or restricted by schools shot up 50 percent last year, to 348 from 229 the year before, according to the constitutional-liberties watchdog group.

The success rate for such attempts was the highest in four years. In 41 percent of the reported incidents, challenged materials were removed or restricted in some way, says the group's report, "Attacks on the Freedom to Learn."

Incidents occurred in 44 states in all parts of the country last year. The Midwest led other regions with 119 incidents, followed by the South, the West, and the Northeast, the report says.

The states with the most challenges were Florida, Texas, California, Oregon, and Minnesota.

Religious objections were the most common cause of complaint, the survey found, followed by profane or objectionable language and the treatment of sexuality.

The book most often objected to last year was John Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men*. Others included classic and acclaimed literary works, drug-abuse-prevention programs, and a calisthenics videotape.

■ **The nation's independent schools experienced gains in enrollment, financial aid, and recruitment of minority-group students in the 1991-92 school year,** studies conducted by the National Association of Independent Schools have found.

Over all, enrollment increased by 1 percent during the last school year, compared with a 0.7 percent increase each year for the two previous years, said Margaret Goldsborough, the association's director of public information. Total enrollment stood at about 375,000 students.

Independent schools in the Southwest had the greatest enrollment increase last school year—5 percent—followed by schools in the Southeast, the West, the mid-Atlantic states, and the Midwest.

Schools in New York State, New Jersey, and New England experienced enrollment declines of about 1.5 percent, according to the N.A.I.S.

The percentage of minority students in independent schools grew over the past 10 years from 9.1 percent to 13.5 percent, an increase of nearly 50 percent in the decade, the group found.

More students than in the previous school year received need-based financial aid, raising the national total to more than $276 million for more than 55,000 students. The average grant increased from $4,770 to $5,018.

Interest in independent schools is also up, the N.A.I.S. figures suggest, with inquiries per school up 2 percent in the 1990-91 school year, the most recent year for which data are available.

■ **Officials from the vast majority of colleges and universities responding to a recent survey said the number of applications they received for admission this fall increased over last school year.**

The survey by the National Association of College Admission Counselors found that 440 of 622 responding schools, or 71 percent, said they received more applications this year. In 1991, 50 percent of the 720 respondents said the number of applications they received had increased over the previous year.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents said that applications from minority students also increased this fall.

Daniel J. Saracino, the president of NACAC and the dean of admissions at Santa Clara University, said students see higher education as a "buyer's market and are shopping around by applying to more schools than ever before."

Roughly seven in 10 survey respondents said that more students in 1992 visited campuses, called college recruiters and admissions officials, and wrote to request college information than in 1991.

Copies of the fourth annual admission-trends survey are available free of charge from the National Association of College Admission Counselors, 1631 Prince St., Alexandria, Va. 22314-2818; (703) 836-2222.■

STATES

Pa. Attendance Law No Relief For Assault Victims, Judge Finds

Pennsylvania's compulsory-attendance law does not create a special custodial relationship between public schools and pupils that would make school officials liable for an alleged sexual assault of two female students by male students at a vocational school, a federal appeals court has ruled.

The full U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit last month upheld a three-judge panel's decision from late last year that officials of the Middle Bucks Area Vocational Technical School could not be sued under federal civil-rights law over the alleged harassment and assault of the two female students in a graphics classroom by boys in the class.

The teenage girls' lawsuit asserted that the teacher and other school officials should have prevented the pattern of alleged abuse by the boys. They charged that the teacher often lost control over the classroom and that school officials knew of some of the misconduct but did nothing to correct the situation.

The appeals court ruled 7 to 5 in *D.R.* v. *Middle Bucks Area Vocational Technical School* that the state's attendance law does not restrict a student's personal freedom so as to create a special custodial relationship, such as that between the state and a prisoner or a foster child. Thus, the school officials' alleged inaction was not held to be a constitutional violation.

The court acknowledged the "shocking nature" of the charges but, citing one plaintiff's case in support of its reasoning, held that "the state did nothing to restrict" her "liberty after school hours and thus did not deny her meaningful access to sources of help."

■ **Protests from civil-rights groups have prompted Georgia officials to modify a system for tracking students through their Social Security numbers.**

A law passed by the legislature this year requires districts to ask students for their Social Security numbers to enable the state to better track students and dropout rates.

But civil-rights groups, including the Georgia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, have criticized the measure as likely to have an adverse impact on homeless children who lack documentation and immigrant children who may fear deportation.

The state school board last month responded to such criticism by ruling that schools should not ask students for their numbers if their parents object.

The civil-rights groups, however, argue that districts and individual schools have been ignoring the board's directive and turning children away if they do not provide their Social Security numbers. ■

One Spooky School

Halloween knows no season at one Virginia elementary school.

Marvin Bass Elementary in Lynchburg has a decades-long pattern of phantasmic events that have been making true believers out of skeptical students and teachers.

Recently, shortly after a new audio-activated security system was put in place, mysterious unidentified voices triggered alarms in classroom 307. When police arrived to investigate, they found the doors to the room locked and the windows latched. An unknown power appeared to be at work.

Students and parent alumni of the school claim that the supernatural force behind the witching-hour mischief is the school's namesake, a beloved former teacher and principal who taught for nearly half a century before his death in the 1960's. Rumor has it that the friendly spirit inhabits a boys' locker room that's no longer in use.

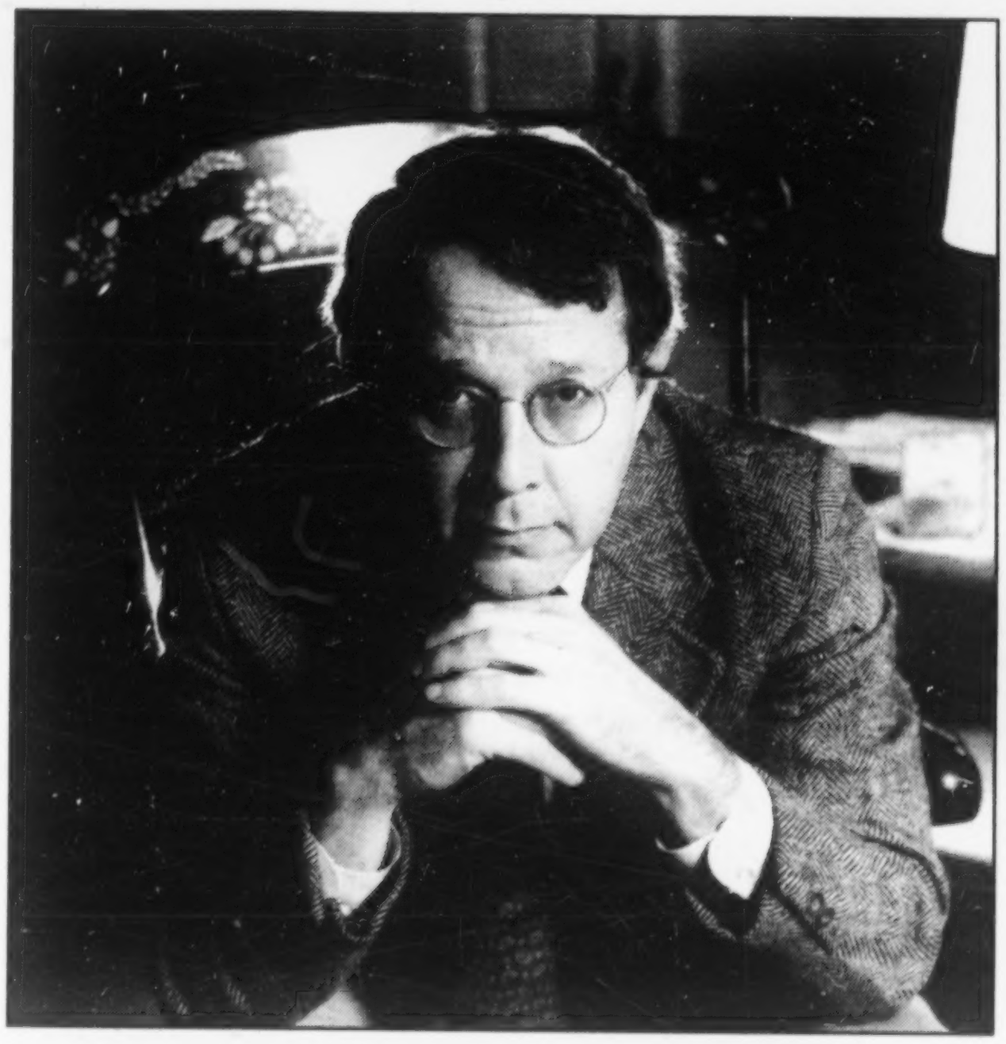
"I think an answering machine tripped the security system," Principal John Blakely contends.

He does admit, however, that students and staff have reported many unexplained phenomena, including missing eyeglasses and ghoulish sounds. One custodian refused to work at night after reporting that the specter brushed past him "like a breeze" late one night.

Leila Cabib

While the principal rules out the possibility of a schoolwide seance or exorcism, he is rueful about the presence of the apparition in his school.

"I'd like the school to be remembered for some great accomplishment," Mr. Blakely sighs, "but I guess it'll be known for the ghost of Marvin Bass." —S.K.G.



James Montanus

In an analysis of 187 studies conducted since 1966, Eric A. Hanushek, left, concluded that there is no strong relationship between school expenditures and student performance. But Jonathan Kozol, far left, argues that, "if money is not the issue, why do rich districts panic at the fear of losing it?"

er way: Experienced teachers may gravitate to schools with high-performing students.

Counter to Common Sense

Mr. Hanushek concedes that his conclusion appears to run counter to common sense.

"How could it be I claim no relationship between expenditures and performance when we see it all the time?" he asks. "Kids perform well in Montgomery County, Md., and poorly in low-spending communities. Isn't there an obvious relation?"

"What I am trying to give," he continues, "is a measure of how expenditures add to performance of kids over and above families and other sources of learning. It's a value-added notion of schools. It's the right answer if you want to think of policies schools can adopt."

Mr. Hanushek also suggests that much of the spending on affluent schools—such as New Trier High School in suburban Chicago—goes to non-educational amenities.

"I would bet dollars to doughnuts they have the best violin instruction and Olympic swimming pools," he says. "They're buying consumption goods. They are trying to throw money at something they think is important."

And, he acknowledges, the examples in Mr. Kozol's book are "tragic."

But, he says, the answer is not to redistribute funds from wealthier districts to poorer ones.

"The simple answer, readjust funds, could be damaging to some schools that got their act together," he contends.

Mr. Kozol strongly disagrees, and argues that the inequalities in physical conditions have a powerful effect on students.

"A school that is physically repellent has an unquestioned power of obliteration on a child's sense of self-respect and motivation," Mr. Kozol says. "They know the difference" between their schools and those in affluent suburbs.

"If money is not the issue," he argues, "why do rich districts panic at the fear of losing it?"

Differences in Teachers

Mr. Hanushek concedes that there are inequities among schools, but he says that looking at per-pupil spending is the wrong way to look at equity.

Rather, he says, the important differences among schools are the differences in the quality of teachers.

"It makes a difference what classroom you are in," he says. "If we didn't find that, we'd be suspicious—parents know. In fact, research confirms it."

To address that issue, Mr. Hanushek argues, policymakers should find a way to attract better teachers.

But, he says, "there is little hope of changing schools importantly by doing such things as raising salaries and letting the system rip. Bad teachers like higher salaries just as much as good teachers."

The best way to reward good teaching, the economist suggests, is to reward teachers after the fact—pay more to those who produce the greatest growth in student achievement.

But such a solution, he acknowledges, might be impossible politically.

"One thing we know is merit-pay systems never survive in schools," he says. ■

infants are able to perform this at such an early age suggests that it may be innate.

Another [aspect] is that a wide range of studies on animals [has] shown this kind of ability to discriminate numbers, which suggests that an innate mental mechanism dedicated to determining number in the environment and to performing these simple rudimentary calculations may be part of our common cognitive structure.

Q. How do you know that the babies' response means they understood the arithmetical concept underlying the change in quantity? Isn't it possible that they were simply responding to an unexpected change in the display?

A. The first experiment I did was a one-plus-one situation, resulting in one object or two. We found babies . . . were surprised when they saw only one object, not two. The natural predisposition is for them to look longer at something new, but, in this case, they are looking longer at what the original situation was because they know the addition or subtraction should have altered the situation.

One interpretation is that they were expecting exactly two and computing the result; another is that they knew that if you add something there should be a change, but they didn't know how big or in what direction, more or less. The control I did for that was . . . a one-plus-one situation that either resulted in two or three. In this case, both the results differ from the original number, so if they weren't computing the precise result, they should be equally happy to see two or three. But in this case . . . they were surprised that there were three, not two. This shows to me a very specific expectation of exactly what that change should be numerically.

Q. You stated in your study that these findings "may provide the foundations for the development of further arithmetical knowledge." What are the implications for students, teachers, and schools?

A. I'm not sure there are any implications for students, teachers, and schools—I would not expect so at this point. In general, this kind of research is aimed at laying out just what is the fundamental structure of human cognition. The more we know about ways in which the normal human mind functions, the better we will be able down the road to understand what's different about individuals whose mental functioning deviates from the norm and how to ultimately address their problems. ■

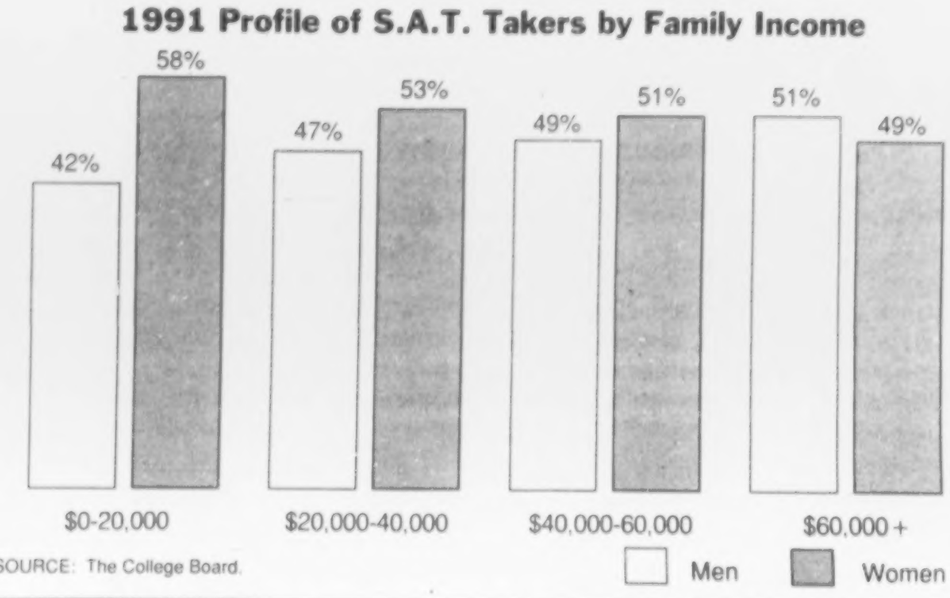
DIMENSIONS

S.A.T. Gender Gap

The gender gap on the Scholastic Aptitude Test is related to the different populations of women and men taking the test, according to an article in the Spring, 1992, *College Board Review*.

Analyzing the 1990-91 test takers, Susan H. Murphy, the dean of admissions at Cornell University, found that more women than men come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, a factor related to lower performance on the test.

1991 Profile of S.A.T. Takers by Family Income



SOURCE: The College Board.